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Erika Mantz

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MEDIA ADVISORY: Is the Taliban a Cult? UNH professor provides insight on American found fighting for bin Laden

By [*Erika Mantz*](#)

603-862-1567

UNH News Bureau

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David Frankfurter, associate professor of history and religious studies at the University of New Hampshire, is available to talk with the media about the recent discovery of an American fighting for the Taliban. Professor Frankfurter is an expert on religious sects and charismatic leaders.

Frankfurter says that while he was not surprised John Walker was attracted to Islam, he believes he is an anomaly in fighting for the Taliban.

"Many disgruntled, dissatisfied youth spend years searching for spiritual clarity," he says. "We're more used to people gravitating to Buddhism or Hinduism or into the wilderness, but maybe Islam is bigger than we thought. It is a religion that attracts many African Americans because it is fundamentally antiracist."

Frankfurter compares the Taliban to right-wing antiabortionists. "Like a lot of Christians, many Muslims don't understand how their religion, and its peacefulness, can be used to legitimize violence," he says, "but you can find legitimation for violence in pretty much any religion."

Professor Frankfurter is available for further comment at (603) 862-3015.

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